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Review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda

Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements on the review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Progress report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements on the Cities Alliance

In its resolution 55/195, the General Assembly decided that, as part of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda , the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), who also acts as Co-Chair of the Cities Alliance, should report to it at its special session on the Cities Alliance initiative, including its contribution to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Executive Director, which summarizes the progress of the Cities Alliance since its launch by Habitat and the World Bank in 1999, and highlights the main activities that are currently under way and in preparation.

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Progress report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements on the Cities Alliance

I. Background

1. One of the defining features of international politics in the last decade of the twentieth century was the series of global conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. The last of these was the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), also known as the City Summit, which set a new standard in the way in which the United Nations grappled with a major policy challenge.

2. New benchmarks that were set at Habitat II included the extent to which the policy debates of the United Nations were opened to a myriad of organizations and interests from civil society and, significantly, local authorities. In particular, Habitat II initiated an international dialogue with local authorities, complementing discussion and debate on urban policies at the national and global levels and catalysing new thinking and new approaches to urban development. The partnership spirit of Habitat II was taken home by national delegations and led to serious reassessments of urban development policies within countries and within the context of international technical cooperation.

3. A number of bilateral and multilateral agencies were prompted by Habitat II to reassess their policies or were confirmed in their orientation towards a new urban developmental paradigm. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which was appointed as focal point for the monitoring and implementation of the Habitat Agenda, confronted its own operational and organizational limitations in order to be able to provide more appropriate support and assistance to national and local governments.

4. Several international agencies recognized the limitations of development assistance in the past decades, constrained by project-based and sectoral approaches. The scale of the urbanization process and the concomitant growth of urban poverty pointed to the need for a new strategy to address these problems at a scale sufficient to have a meaningful impact.

5. National Governments retain the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. At the same time, the global trend towards the decentralization of responsibilities to local authorities is not consistently underwritten by the decentralization of powers and resources, nor is it matched by institutional capacity within local governments themselves.

6. Among the most important themes to emerge from this reassessment was the need for coherent urban development policies within the framework of decentralized political authority. These policies must include the rural dimension of sustainable urban development and focus on the needs and rights of the urbanizing poor.

7. At its seventeenth session, held in Nairobi in May 1999, the Commission on Human Settlements endorsed Habitat's new strategic vision, which called for Habitat to adopt the profile and style of an advocacy agency, with a clearer normative focus. Part of this vision was to assist national and local governments in improving the implementation of the Habitat Agenda through the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure and the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, respectively spearheading the two goals of the Habitat Agenda.

8. During the same period, the World Bank was developing its new urban and local government strategy, which was endorsed by the Bank's Board at the end of 1999. Both Habitat and the World Bank emerged with greater clarity on the need for a focus on urban poverty reduction.

9. The Cities Alliance was the organizational consequence of that convergence and of the post-Habitat II assessment. Launched by Habitat and the World Bank in May 1999, the Cities Alliance is designed to facilitate the operational implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

10. The Cities Alliance supports two major areas of activities, which emanate from the Habitat Agenda and are directly associated with the normative frameworks provided by the two Global Campaigns. As such, the Cities Alliance is an important part of an emerging global architecture that aims to achieve results at scale by creating a new coherence of effort, linking international development cooperation with investment follow-up.

11. The two components of the Cities Alliance emanate from the global mandate provided by the Habitat Agenda. Overall, the goal of the Cities Alliance is to promote collective action in the following areas:

(a) City development strategies that reflect a shared vision for the city's future and local priorities for action to reduce urban poverty;

(b) City-wide and nationwide slum upgrading to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

12. A number of significant features characterize the Cities Alliance and its approach to urban poverty reduction:

(a) The Cities Alliance has been created to facilitate complementarity between different organizations, promoting innovation and new methodologies;

(b) As equal members of an Alliance, each organization has acknowledged the need for collaboration and cooperation;

(c) The Cities Alliance does not require any separate implementation capacity but implements its programmes through its members, working with national and local partners.

13. Central to the approach of the Cities Alliance is the need to match its limited technical cooperation resources with the mobilization of the capital investments required to achieve urban development at the appropriate scale. This relationship had been lacking in previous attempts to provide support to Governments in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

14. The Cities Alliance has organized its work around three objectives:

(a) Building political commitment and a shared vision;

(b) Catalysing city-wide and national impacts to go to scale;

(c) Serving as a learning alliance to fill knowledge gaps.

II. Urban upgrading: cities without slums

15. One of the most significant features of the Habitat Agenda is the articulation of the concept of enablement, which defines a new role and approach for the state and the public sector. Where this approach has been followed, it has allowed non-state delivery capacity to emerge and has facilitated the participation of the organized urban poor.

16. The Cities Alliance produced the "Cities without slums" action plan, which has set the target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The action plan was launched by its Patron, President Nelson Mandela, at the inaugural meeting of the Cities Alliance, held in Berlin in December 1999. The goal was strongly endorsed by the Secretary-General in his report to the Millennium Assembly, and was adopted by the General Assembly as part of the Millennium Declaration.

17. With support from the Cities Alliance, a number of countries are making significant progress in creating the conditions to improve shelter delivery. A notable feature of many Cities Alliance projects has been the emphasis on the provision of security of tenure as well as equal treatment for women in access to land markets and credit.

18. Brazil is building upon the experience of a number of its cities to develop a decentralized national urban upgrading strategy, based on facilitating access to secure land tenure and the establishment of financial mechanisms to ensure sustainability.

19. Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, is developing a city-wide poverty reduction strategy, with community organizations working directly with the municipality and the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights. The Urban Poor Community Development Fund will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the strategy.

20. El Salvador's national housing policy promotes the legalization of land tenure and the participation of private sector developers in urban upgrading. In a demonstration of collaboration, the 14 mayors of metropolitan San Salvador have identified upgrading as the first priority for 2002-2003, and are pooling their capacity to achieve this on a city-wide basis.

21. India's draft national slum upgrading policy also emphasizes the importance of secure tenure, and is

particularly clear about recognizing the role of women. The National Slum Dwellers Federation, Mahila Milan and SPARC have forged networks of community-based organizations and partnerships with a number of local and state authorities, as well as acting as agents for the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure. The state of Gujarat has recently requested assistance and support in drafting a slum upgrading policy.

22. In partnership with other members of Slum Dwellers International in the Philippines and South Africa, where the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure has also been launched, the National Slum Dwellers Federation is task manager with Habitat in a programme funded by the Cities Alliance to promote pro-poor slum upgrading frameworks in Mumbai, Manila and Durban.

23. Mauritania has committed itself to a nationwide slum upgrading programme based on the provision of secure tenure, which is being initiated with city-wide upgrading programmes in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

24. Viet Nam is developing a national strategy to step up slum upgrading and provide better housing and services to the urban poor. The strategy will target the provision of basic infrastructure in low income areas, improving security of tenure, extending access to affordable credit, and improving standards and norms to encourage innovation and progressive improvements.

25. Since February 2001, Kenya has been working with Habitat to prepare a city-wide slum upgrading programme for Nairobi.

III. City development strategies

26. In the period since Habitat II, the issue of urban governance has assumed a central position in attempts to achieve more sustainable urban development, a key goal of the Habitat Agenda. The Cities Alliance has identified city development strategies as an appropriate vehicle to assist local and national governments in achieving that objective.

27. The goal of a city development strategy is an inclusive city that raises the quality of life for all of its citizens through improvements in urban governance, economic growth and service delivery. Success will be measured by the impact on urban poverty reduction.

28. At a conference sponsored by the Government of Japan and the Cities Alliance, held in Fukuoka, Japan, in July 2000, 23 Asian cities involved in city development strategies agreed to serve as resource cities and to support each other through the sharing of knowledge.

29. Nigeria's Nassarawa state government and the Karu local government are committed to stepping up slum upgrading through a city development strategy as an integral part of their commitment to adopt pro-poor policies to tackle urban poverty and growing inequality.

30. Madagascar's national and regional capitals are preparing city poverty reduction strategies in a collective effort with civil society, private investors and organizations of the urban poor, supported by most of the bilateral and multilateral partners active in urban development cooperation in the country.

31. In Bulgaria, the Sophia city development strategy has focused on developing democratic and self-reliant municipal management systems in an attempt to generate sustainable long-term benefits for its citizens.

32. In Johannesburg, the city management has used a city development strategy to institute a number of decisive steps to improve service delivery and revenue collection, instituting a range of reforms in an attempt to overcome decades of division and a declining revenue base.

33. The local authority network in the Philippines, the League of Cities, has taken the lead in promoting city development strategies, with five cities actively engaged in participatory transformation exercises.

IV. Conclusion

34. Through the creation of the Cities Alliance, significant organizations within the international development community (see annex) have committed themselves to providing improved support to national Governments for implementing the Habitat Agenda. Although the Cities Alliance is relatively new, it has already begun to demonstrate the viability of that approach. Strengthened by the emerging emphasis on coherent urban development policy, the increasing impact of the two Global Campaigns and the operational capacity mobilized under the banner of the Cities Alliance, the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the national and local levels will receive new impetus in the years to come.

Annex

A. Structure and membership of the Cities Alliance

1. The members of the Cities Alliance constitute the Consultative Group, which is co-chaired by the World Bank and Habitat.

2. At its inaugural meeting, held in Berlin in December 1999, the Consultative Group adopted the charter of the Cities Alliance.[a]

3. The Consultative Group met subsequently in Montreal in June 2000 and in Rome in December 2000. The next meeting of the Consultative Group will be held in Mumbai, India, in December 2001.

4. The Consultative Group has also created a five-member steering committee, which guides and monitors the work of the secretariat between the sessions of the Consultative Group.

5. The Consultative Group currently has the following 16 members:

Multilateral

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, World Bank

Bilateral

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America

International associations of local authorities

International Union of Local Authorities, World Federation of United Cities, Metropolis, World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination

6. The Commission on Human Settlements is represented in the Consultative Group by its Chairperson.

7. The following are observers: Austria, Denmark, Finland and Spain; African Development Bank; European Commission; International Labour Organization; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme.

[a] The charter and the full range of Cities Alliance documents may be accessed at: www.citiesalliance.org.

B. Cities Alliance commitments, 2000-2001

(United States dollars)

Region	*2000*	*2001*	*Total*
Sub-Saharan Africa	820 000	705 000	1 525 000
Asia and the Pacific	1 386 000	1 650 000	3 036 000
Eastern Europe	75 000	249 800	324 800
Latin America and the Caribbean	360 000	880 000	1 240 000
Arab States	130 000	225 000	355 000
Global and interregional	884 000	500 000	1 384 000
Total	**3 655 000**	**4 209 800**	**7 864 800**